

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

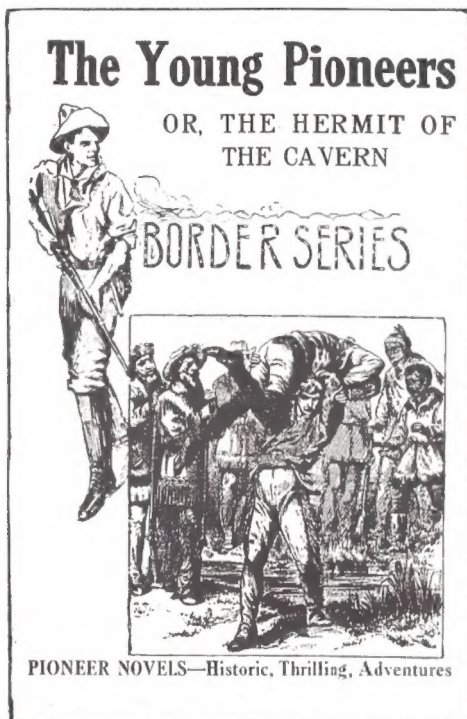
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## THE BOY SCOUTS VERSUS THE SERIES BOOKS

By John T. Dizer



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BORDER SERIES

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## THE BOY SCOUTS VERSUS THE SERIES BOOKS

### Part I — Background of the "Great Book War"

By John T. Dizer

Once upon a time the youth of America were inundated by a flood of sensational trashy series books instigated by the Stratemeyer Syndicate. These books threatened to "blow out the boys' brains," so Franklin K. Mathiews, Chief Librarian of the Boy Scouts, wearing the whitest of his white hats, stepped into the breach, stemmed the tide, threw back the forces of evil and peace reigned in a calmer and purer world. This, at least, is the impression garnered from the article, "For it was Indeed He," in the April, 1934, issue of *Fortune*, and numerous articles which use it as the foundation for their research.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact the Boy Scouts (or Mathiews) were about as successful in stemming the tide as King Canute or, to mix metaphors even more, as Don Quixote tilting against the windmill. The whole controversy was really a battle or possibly a skirmish in the 100 year war pitting advocates of "good books" (the reader has to supply his own definition—no one else can agree on one) versus "bad books" (also undefined but dime novelish, action oriented, slangy, and popular) which still goes on and still generates more heat than light. Edward Stratemeyer and his literary syndicate had about as much to do with the actual fighting as Quixote's windmill. Mathiews pulled at least one sneaky end-run behind Stratemeyer's back (in Mathiews dealings with Grosset & Dunlap) and wasn't half as noble as he might have been. In fact his hat was definitely tattletale grey. TOM SWIFT, the BOBBSEY TWINS and BUNNY BROWN (Stratemeyer's proteges) suffered no apparent harm and Stratemeyer's hat turns out (or so it appears from my elevated vantage point) to be three shades whiter than that of the pride of the Boy Scouts, Franklin K. Mathiews.

But what, you may well ask, was the controversy, the "great book war" (or whatever) all about? A very brief summary follows: Franklin K. Mathiews was "Chief Librarian" of the Boy Scouts of America. He was an implacable foe of dime novels and "cheap" literature and used his position to attack all such literature and the books of the Stratemeyer Syndicate in particular. He attempted to elevate boys reading habits by issuing the BSA EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY and pushing the sales through the BSA. He hired Percy Keese Fitzhugh to write series books, but series with a Scouting theme and which were approved by the BSA. HE attacked "cheap" literature on any and all occasions, his most widely known opus being "Blowing Out the Boys' Brains," published in 1914. He developed the "Safety First Juvenile Book Week," later known as the "National Book Week." He didn't do much damage and would probably be forgotten except for the *Fortune* article. This article resurrected all of the old controversy in a most flippant manner with a plethora of details and a marked paucity of accurate facts. This article, too, would have faded into deserved oblivion except that over the years a number of librarians picked up on the article to justify their fears about a fiction factory and series books and have written their own articles based on it until the original article has practically been canonized. In addition, a number of articles, all based on *Fortune*, have been written on such topics as censorship in juvenile writings, the "Great Book War" between Mathiews/BSA and Edward Stratemeyer and the effects on childrens' reading habits.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

For the benefit of any illiterati let's look at the nuances, subtle or otherwise, together with lots of assorted facts. It really started with the rise in juvenile mass publishing in the post Civil War period. There were numerous schools of thought concerning juvenile literature at that time. The pre-Civil War books for juveniles were pretty dreadful, at least from the standpoint of a normal, lively and reasonably intelligent child. Morally, they were great. Grammatically they were impeccable. No slang, no undesirable characters, no glimpses of real life. A good deal of suffering and dying (as examples for the youthful reader), a lot of wholesome didacticism (as in the PETER PARLEY and ROLLO series), and in general an unbelievable accumulation of middle class dullness.

When a "modern" children's genre began to evolve it went off in several directions as did the critics of the genre. "Realism," "Sensationalism," and "Slang," were typical points of reference for critics. Most critics praised the "realism" of Louisa May Alcott's books. Some were upset by her use of "slang."<sup>5</sup> It was never explained how one could have realism in dialogue without the use of worldly phrases and expressions but one was supposed to manage. Both "Optic" and "Castlemon" were impeached for using vulgar and common speech in their books. The reader might be entertained, though this concept was suspect in some circles, but he/she must also be elevated by the use of a pure and pristine prose. The one thing that critics eventually agreed upon seemed to be that mild realism was acceptable and mild action also, but that when realism became extravagant and therefore unrealistic it blended into sensationalism. Sensationalism, as we all know, is absolute anathema to serious, conscientious critics of children's books and to be avoided as the plague-or more so. Alcott, herself, lit into "Optic" for *his* sensationalism and "Optic" riposted in kind. During this period a large body of works, commonly called dime novels, appeared with no pretense to elegance of printing or beauty of binding but containing large amounts of action and a relative paucity of moral strictures. Therefore it was convenient and pleasant for critics to lump together dime novels and any children's books of which they disapproved as "Sensational."

Another element appeared on the scene in the person of Anthony Comstock, earnest seeker after sin and successful finder of same. As the chief agent of the "New York Society for the Suppression of Vice" it was his "privilege and duty" to overthrow all "devices to plunder, ruin, and debauch" our young. His book TRAPS FOR THE YOUNG was published in 1883. As Bremner notes in his introduction to the 1967 reprint, "As far as children were concerned evil reading encompassed nearly all light fiction and popular journalism. Comstock's abhorrence of the daydreaming and vain imaginings inspired by sentimental novels perpetuated the view firmly established-or at least often expressed-in the Connecticut of his youth that reading frivolous literature impeded the mental and moral development of children."<sup>6</sup> Among Comstock's traps were Half-Dime Novels and Story Papers, the subject of Chapter III. "And it came to pass that as Satan went to and fro upon the earth, watching his traps and rejoicing over his numerous victims, he found room for improvement in some of his schemes. He resolved to make the most of these vile illustrated weekly papers.... These sure-ruin traps comprise a large variety of half-dime novels, five and ten cent story papers, and low-priced pamphlets for boys and girls. This class includes the silly, insipid tale, the coarse, slangy story in the dialect of the barroom, the blood-and-thunder romance of border life, and the exaggerated details of crimes, real and imaginary."<sup>7</sup> And then he goes into details! Comstock definitely gave dime novels a bad press. The worst of it was that he was taken seriously (just

as was McCarthy in our era), he influenced several generations of educators and librarians and his attitudes still influence and permeate some critic's thinking. Mathiews was obviously an admirer of Comstock, the *Fortune* article quoted Comstock, possibly facetiously, and some of the writers about the *Fortune* article quoted these quotes, most approvingly. "Your child is in danger of having its pure mind cursed for life." This sentence was in italics-as Comstock went on to give gory examples as to how reading dime novels, certain "bound" books or anything connected with them can lead only to a debauched life. Comstock certainly thought he wore a white hat. As the popularity of dime novels and story papers waned and that of series books waxed the transfer of the stigma of sensationalism and general corruption to series books was easily made, at least in certain circles.

In this country the first twenty-five or so years of this century saw unbelievable changes in growth of all kind, in science and technology, in youth movements, in social attitudes and in written mass communication. Strange as it now seems our young people at that time read omnivorously, insatiably and proficiently. Dozens of publishers specialized in books for young people. Some books were very cheaply printed and sold at a cheap price. Some were printed in paper covers and sold as nickel or dime novels. Some were nicely printed and bound and sold for over a dollar. And some were nicely printed and bound and sold for about 50¢. The critics could identify nickel and dime novels and the very cheap books and peg them as Comstock trash. The well printed, well bound and expensive books were equally obviously "good" books, regardless of the contents. But the attractive book which sold for 50¢ was a different matter, particularly if it were a series book. It was undoubtedly a wolf in sheep's clothing, a Dime Novel or Sensational piece of Trash passing itself off as proper literature. So this was the situation as we slowly approach the "epic struggle" between the Boy Scouts of America and Edward Stratemeyer.

Now, since you can't tell the players without a program, this is the program. First is Edward Stratemeyer in the black hat, nemesis of all that Franklin K. Mathiews stood for. Next, since the story of Mathiews career is so completely interwoven into the early years of the BSA and since a perspective of early Scouting is really necessary, comes a rather involved history of Scouting. Then, with all this as foundation, comes the story of Franklin Mathiews, white hat and all and how Mathiews, James E. West and the BSA battled the forces of evil as personified by the Stratemeyer Syndicate and the purveyors of non-BSA approved series Scout books. So first Edward Stratemeyer:

It is hard to condense into a brief account the story of Edward Stratemeyer, the man who was unquestionably the most influential writer/producer of children's books in the country for well over a quarter of a century. He was a highly moral man, modest and retiring and an unbelievably prolific writer. He developed his skills writing for boys magazines and story papers. He wrote extensively for Street & Smith including numerous dime novels of various types. He completed an unfinished book by "Oliver Optic" and several books left unfinished by Horatio Alger, Jr. In the fourteen years between 1889 and 1903 Stratemeyer wrote over 130 full-length stories plus many shorter pieces, served as editor of *Good News* and *Young People of America*, and publisher and editor of *Bright Days*. He also wrote 39 juvenile hardcover books and since 38 of his juvenile serials were also published in hardcover he had 77 different hardcover books published in less than ten years.<sup>8</sup> All of these he had written himself. This point is important, because Stratemeyer had more ideas than time. His books had been well received and favorably reviewed and he was

considered in many circles a capable author, the successor to "Optic" and Alger. His books were relatively expensive, the ROVER BOYS selling in 1899 at \$1.25 a copy which may have had something to do with an image of quality and the favorable reviews. About 1903, Stratemeyer conceived the idea of a juvenile fiction factory which eventually became the Stratemeyer Syndicate. Although he would continue to write, he would spend more time developing ideas for series, creating the characters, the plots and the general concepts of the stories and then hire professional writers to flesh out the stories. Stratemeyer would then edit the stories and publish them under one of his pen-names or under new "house names." The idea wasn't new. Both Dumas and Balzac had used a similar approach. Stratemeyer did not employ "hack" writers to whip out poorly written trashy books as some writers have charged. It wasn't good business and Stratemeyer was an extremely good business man. He hired good writers and paid them a flat fee for a book. Such writers as Howard Garis (of UNCLE WIGGILY fame) wrote many of the early BOBBSEY TWINS (together with Garis's wife Lillian) as well as the early TOM SWIFTS, MOTOR BOYS, GREAT MARVEL series and many other. W. Bert Foster wrote many of the RUTH FIELDINGS. St. George Rathborne and later Mildred Wirt and Leslie McFarland are examples of other competent Syndicate writers. Working for Stratemeyer meant a sure outlet for their work and sure money. He wrote the outlines and developed the framework but the writers had considerable leeway in the writing. The quality of the writers was reflected in their writing and to some extent determined the popularity of the series. So the Stratemeyer Syndicate was formed to produce juvenile books for all ages, and for both boys and girls. Along with this idea Stratemeyer came up with another. In a sense he was the Henry Ford of the business. He agreed to cut his profit per book so the publishers could sell at a lower price. The result was a fairly well bound book, well printed and attractive and selling at prices around 50¢. He was immediately successful. Stratemeyer knew what children liked to read. His books were eminently respectable but full of action. Sales mushroomed as he anticipated trends in juvenile interest. Since, however, Franklin K. Mathiews as Chief Scout Librarian fulminated time and time again against the "fiction factory" and its merchandising methods let us examine the known series issued under "house names" by the Syndicate from 1904 through 1913.<sup>9</sup> This listing does not include the ROVER BOYS, PUTNAM HALL and other series of the period written personally by Edward Stratemeyer. It does include the two Garis series (LARRY DEXTER and DICK HAMILTON) since Mrs. Adams insisted that they were issued by the Syndicate and that she had given ownership to Howard Garis only after the death of her father, based on a promise made by Stratemeyer.

1904	BOBBSEY TWINS	Laura Lee Hope	G&D
1905	DEEP SEA (1st vol. by Stratemeyer)	Roy Rockwood	G&D
1906	BOY HUNTERS (possibly Stratemeyer)	Capt. Ralph Bonehill	C&L
	BOYS OF BUSINESS	Allen Chapman	C&L
	GREAT MARVEL	Roy Rockwood	C&L
	MOTOR BOYS	Clarence Young	C&L
	RALPH OF THE RAILROAD	Allen Chapman	G&D
1907	LARRY DEXTER	Howard Garis	G&D
	JACK RANGER	Clarence Young	C&L
1908	DAREWELL CHUMS	Allen Chapman	C&L
	DOROTHY DALE	Margaret Penrose	C&L
1909	DICK HAMILTON	Howard Garis	G&D
	THE WEBSTER SERIES	Frank V. Webster	C&L
1910	TOM SWIFT	Victor Appleton	G&D

1910	MOTOR GIRLS	Margaret Penrose	C&L
	COLLEGE SPORTS	Lester Chadwick	C&L
1911	OUTDOOR CHUMS	Capt. Quincy Allen	C&L
1912	BASEBALL JOE	Lester Chadwick	C&L
	BOYS OF COLUMBIA HIGH	Graham B. Forbes	C&L
	PIONEER BOYS	Harrison Adams	Page
	RACER BOYS	Clarence Young	C&L
	TOMMY TIPTOP	Raymond Stone	G&M
	UP AND DOING (later FAIRVIEW BOYS)	Frederick Gordon	G&M
1913	DAVE DASHAWAY	Roy Rockwood	C&L
	FRED FENTON	Allen Chapman	C&L
	MOTION PICTURE CHUMS	Victor Appleton	G&D
	MOVING PICTURE BOYS	Victor Appleton	G&D
	OUTDOOR GIRLS	Laura Lee Hope	G&D
	RUTH FIELDING	Alice R. Emerson	C&L
	SADDLE BOYS	Captain James Carson	C&L
	SPEEDWELL BOYS	Roy Rockwood	C&L
	TOM FAIRFIELD	Allen Chapman	C&L

Many of these series are familiar to researchers, collectors and readers of series books. They were tremendously popular, which was part of Mathiews' hangup, and unquestionably a tremendous influence on shaping juvenile attitudes. They were "morally straight," quite middle classish, sometimes priggish and withal, lively and very readable. The literary values were not outstanding, the plotting and character development were often thin and the fact that the books were part of a "series" meant there was often a sameness to the books. But: "Explosives! Guaranteed to Blow Your Boy's Brains Out," as Mathiews claimed? This is absolutely ridiculous, both for the Syndicate books and the popular series books of other publishers. There was lots of action and adventure in Syndicate books and indeed in all popular series books and the action was often not realistic but most of it could have happened and it was the kind of action boys identified with and could dream about, in TOM SWIFT just as much as CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS.

A point which might as well be addressed now is the number and quality of Scout books produced by the Stratemeyer Syndicate both before and after Mathiews' attack. I have already listed all the Syndicate series produced up to the 1914 period when Mathiews waxed particularly virulent and I have tried to point out that these books were certainly entertaining and not harmful in any sense and, in fact, much better than many of the books of the day. If you don't believe me, *read* the popular juvenile fiction of the period. These details are most important because a number of writers have followed the lead of the *Fortune* article and accept as fact that Stratemeyer was chiefly responsible for providing material to "Blow Out the Boy's Brains." They have also assumed that Stratemeyer produced numbers of inferior Scout series books. As a matter of fact I can find no evidence whatsoever that Stratemeyer produced *any* series of Scouting books at any time. Many Scouting series were produced under "fiction factory" arrangements by several publishers but not by Stratemeyer. Scout books of varying quality were produced by writers who wrote for Stratemeyer at various times (i.e. Rathborne and Garis) but these books had no connection with Stratemeyer or the Stratemeyer Syndicate. In interviews with Mrs. Adams (Stratemeyer's daughter and principal partner in the Syndicate after his death) in 1963 and again in 1975 I was most specific in questions about the Payson and Ralphson SCOUTING series (sometimes attributed to the Syndicate), her feelings about the Mathiews episode and also about the

*Fortune* article. The Payson and Ralphson SCOUTING series simply were not Syndicate series. In addition to Mrs. Adams' statements, it can be noted that the Ralphson books were published by M. A. Donohue and the Payson books by Hurst, neither of which companies published any Stratemeyer series in that d, that Payson was a pen-name of John H. Goldfrap who did not write for Stratemeyer and that Ralphson apparently was the name of an actual writer.<sup>10,11</sup> Although Rathborne wrote some volumes of the Carter BOY SCOUT series for Burt, Nancy Axelrad, partner in the Stratemeyer Syndicate, assured me that the Syndicate did not handle that series either.<sup>12,13</sup> As further proof, the Syndicate did not place its series with the Burt Company. There were actually 2½ books with a Scouting theme, published by the Syndicate, which I will discuss shortly.

Mrs. Adams was most vocal about both Mathiews actions with Grosset & Dunlap and the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY as well as about the *Fortune* article. According to her, Mathiews had never approached her father nor made any attempt to discuss Mathiews concerns about the quality of Stratemeyer's series books. Instead he went behind Stratemeyer's back to G&D and influenced them to start the EBL, a reprint library of "good" books to sell at "cheap" book prices. She felt it was uncalled for and unethical. The *Fortune* article tells a tale of Stratemeyer's skirmish with G&D, a skirmish from which he withdrew when G&D gave him sort of a "you might go if we had to make a choice" between Stratemeyer and the BSA.<sup>14</sup> This tale has never made much sense. G&D was essentially a reprint house and their main stock of new juveniles came from Stratemeyer. Stratemeyer owned the plates to his books and placed them where he pleased. He had had one lawsuit, in 1908, with Chatterton-Peck just so that he could move to a larger publisher (G&D) but he also had numerous major series published by Cupples & Leon and Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, in particular. In fact, years later G&D would wage an acrimonious lawsuit trying to prevent the Stratemeyer Syndicate from taking their series to Simon & Schuster. There was no problem whatsoever in finding publishers but Grosset & Dunlap provided a good market and Stratemeyer saw no reason to leave. Mrs. Adams also commented about personal photographs which the family had loaned to *Fortune* for the article and which *Fortune* had ruined, as well as the errors and distortions in facts and the general tone of the *Fortune* article. It was clear that the *Fortune* article still renkled, even after 40 years.

Back to the Stratemeyer Syndicate Scouting books. The first was TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS BOY SCOUTS, by "Raymond Stone."<sup>15</sup> It was published by Graham & Matlack and was copyrighted in 1914, the year of "Blowing Out the Boys Brains," according to my copy. (Both Johnson and Hudson say 1915).<sup>16</sup> It is the fifth volume of the TOMMY TIPTOP series. It is a most pleasant and innocent story with fire making and boiling water and hiking and such. Tommy was about ten years old. His gang went to the first annual meet of the Scout troops in the area and watched them march. The first division carried real rifles, "which they had borrowed for the occasion. The next patrol was led by a corps of buglers, and the Scouts had wooden guns. Next came some with staffs, and following them was a patrol equipped with bows and arrows." (These may have been American Boy Scouts, at least the ones with guns.) Contests in the part were the usual Scouting ones including first aid but also target practice. Tommy bought an official manual for 50¢ which he thought was high. He was bitterly disappointed to find he was too young to join the Scouts but his father, after studying the manual told him, "...while you can't officially become a Boy Scout and wear the regular uniform, there's no law to prevent you starting a patrol of your own. You can do everything a Boy Scout does except to be officially recognized and have the regular badges. But you

can study how to make blazed trails, you can study wood-craft, and anything else you like. You can go on 'hikes' as the walking tours are called, and you and your friends can go camping. In short you can be Boy Scouts in almost every sense of the word, and when the time comes, when you are old enough to join the real organization, you'll be that much ahead." So the boys got a simple brown uniform, somewhat like that of the Boy Scouts, but without infringing on the rights of that society. They went on hikes and had a course in "wood-craft" and copied the Boy Scouts and were proud as punch and would have made good Webelos today. It is awfully hard to find anything to criticize in this book. A lot of description of building a fire and cooking and archery but not a thing about combating foreign spies or such deeds of derring do.

The next book in the series is TOMMY TIPTOP AND HIS GREAT SHOW, copyright 1917.<sup>17</sup> I call it the one-half Scouting book of Stratemeyer because while there is mention of Scouting the emphasis is on the Great Show which is to earn money to pay a specialist for a boy who was in danger of losing his eyesight. However it was the Scouting spirit which was behind the Great Show. "And don't forget, fellows," was Tommy's parting word, "that this is regular Boy Scout work. The one thing they have to do is to help others. This will show that if we are too young to belong to the regular Scouts we can do just as good work in our Silver Fox Patrol."

The only other Scout book published by the Stratemeyer Syndicate, to the best of my knowledge, is THE BOY SCOUTS OF LENOX, by "Frank V. Webster," volume 21 of the WEBSTER SERIES, published by Cupples & Leon in 1915.<sup>18</sup> "Webster," like "Stone," is a house name of the Syndicate and the author is unknown. Interestingly enough, two volumes of the WEBSTER SERIES were written by Rathborne who wrote so many Scout books for other publishers. However, as far as is known, he did not write this book. This book, also, was published after "Blowing Out the Boy's Brains." And, like TOMMY TIPTOP, it should have been tepid enough even for Franklin Mathiews. "A few of us might drop some of our bad habits if once we subscribed to the rules of the Scouts... Well boys,...we've all got our faults, and it might be a good thing if joining the Scouts made us change our ways more or less." So they joined and it did. There is a lot of camping and love of the outdoors and kindness to animals and of course a mystery which is satisfactorily solved. The boys also saved a deer who was being attacked by dogs, did some legitimate first aid for a Scout who had broken a leg (it was appropriate before the days of malpractice suits and hungry lawyers) and rescued from a bog the gang who had been hounding them. They were pretty darned good Scouts, even if they were tainted by Stratemeyer. The cover of THE BOY SCOUTS OF LENOX is amusing to any student of old BSA handbook covers. It, too, shows a Scout signaling, sending a non-existent letter in semaphore and using Morse flags, very much like the Leyendecker cover of the Scout handbook in 1914. And that, I believe, is all of the Scouting books published by Stratemeyer. No brains could be blown out here.

Next for the Boy Scouts of America: From the distance of 82 years most of us now think of the Boy Scouts of America as a strong, monolithic organization, founded in this country in February, 1910, with Baden-Powell and his English Scouts as the immediate ancestors. Strong and monolithic it may be now, but in its early days it was anything but, and even its ancestry is somewhat in doubt. There was a bitter battle for leadership in Scouting among a number of different Scout organizations. The BSA won out as a result of luck, some very capable leaders, some opportune legal action and a brilliant and ruthless Chief Scout Executive. The issue, however, was in question for some time. Another modern tendency is an

acceptance of an implied major interest in and authoritative knowledge of juvenile literature on the part of the BSA in its early years. This is not really true. In fact a close examination of the errors, misinformation and inconsistencies in the Boy Scout Handbooks (as thoroughly documented by Snowden) makes one really question the ability of their editorial staff.<sup>19</sup> The "good reading" emphasis, from the available evidence, seems to be more the personal campaign of the Chief Scout Librarian and Chief Scout Executive, a campaign which was accepted by the BSA leadership because it enhanced, in the eyes of educators, librarians and civic leaders, the high moral nature of the BSA. Image, at that time, was tremendously important for the BSA.

To develop a frame of reference we need specifics on early Scout history. Some of the specifics are as hard to tie down as the facts about Richard III's life and death. Since the Tudors won the war the Tudors wrote the history and Hume and Shakespeare have taken care of Richard. Similarly, since the BSA won the war the BSA has written the histories. Records of the other national Scout organizations and, indeed, records of Scouting at all levels are indeed meager. The BSA's own records of American Scouting in 1908, 1909 and part of 1910 are also meager since the BSA didn't even exist then. But lots of Scout troops and Scout organizations did.

Boy Scouting had taken this country by storm. Troops were formed as early as 1908 with many formed in 1909.<sup>20</sup> Sponsors were local YMCAs in particular. Protestant church Sunday School classes also played a significant part. These were individual troops that were not part of a national movement although as Murray notes, in the 1908-09 period "An Englishman had organized a Troop in Sedalia, Missouri, and had gone so far as to appoint field representatives in other states."<sup>21</sup> SCOUTING FOR BOYS, by Baden-Powell was the main resource and in fact was the only handbook advertised in the March 2, 1911, *Boy's Life*. The drive for Regional or National organizations received its initial impetus in 1910. William D. Boyce was so impressed with the "good turn" of a London Scout that he returned to this country determined to make Scouting available to America. As a good businessman he and others incorporated the "Boy Scouts of America" in the District of Columbia on February 8, 1910. This date is celebrated as the birth of Scouting in this country with no particular validity whatsoever.

In Rhode Island Scouting started early in the year and by September 6, 1910, a State Scout Committee was formed and incorporated under Rhode Island laws on April 13, 1911.<sup>22</sup> The Rhode Island Scouts remained separate from the BSA until "The approach of World War I was bringing to the Boy Scouts of America governmental recognition, so that in May, 1917, the Rhode Island Boy Scouts voted to merge."<sup>23</sup> In the Rhode Island Scout history it is noted they did not like "the idea of accepting the leadership of the American Boy Scouts, which was sponsored by the *Boston American* and...we did not know of the start of the Boy Scouts of America in Washington."<sup>24</sup> Neither did the real pioneers of our present national Scout organization, the "Committee on Boys' Work" of the YMCA. It was Edgar M. Robinson of the YMCA who in 1909-1910 enlisted Ernest Thompson Seton and John L. Alexander for help in promoting the Scouting movement. When the YMCA found out that Boyce had incorporated the Boy Scouts of America they arranged a meeting on May 3, 1910, to try to form "one strong independent National Movement. Mr. Boyce told them of the efforts he had made and the money he had spent in trying to promote the Scout Movement and that he had been bitterly disappointed in the results."<sup>25</sup> He agreed to go along with the idea of one national movement and agreed to pay

\$1,000 a month. He did pay \$4,000 eventually but apparently it was sporadic. Alexander, who was serving as Managing Secretary for the Scouts out of the New York YMCA noted, in referring to activities in June, 1910, "Mr. Boyce has withdrawn his financial support and you will see that we have an increasing amount of business with practically no revenue or support."<sup>26</sup> Boyce also attempted to get a bill through Congress for National incorporation of the BSA in May, 1910, without success.

Meanwhile, on May 9, 1910, six days after the Boyce-Robinson meeting, William R. Hearst called a meeting to organize the "American Boy Scout" (sic) but, according to Murray, was told by Robinson who was in attendance that the BSA already existed.<sup>27</sup> Hearst was also told about two to three weeks later that another Scouting organization existed "of which General Peter S. Bokus, U.S.A. retired, is the head." At any rate Hearst went ahead with his plans and on June 24, 1910, incorporated the "American Boy Scout" afterwards changed to the "United States Boy Scout." Bokus's organization was called the "Boy Scouts of the United States" and was apparently sponsored by the National Highway Protection Association. There were also the "National Scouts of America" at Manlius, New York, "Peace Scouts of California" and the YMCA Scouts to say nothing of the "Woodcraft Indians" formed by Seton in 1902 and the "Society of the Sons of Daniel Boone" formed by Dan Beard in 1905.<sup>28</sup> Supposedly all these groups (except the American Boy Scout) had merged with the BSA by November, 1910. There were other groups, however, and many separate troops who had not merged and did not merge for many years, in addition to the Rhode Island Scouts, already mentioned.

#### End of Part I

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "For it was Indeed He," *Fortune*, April, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Donelson, Ken, "Censorship and Early Adolescent Literature: Stratemeyer, Mathiews, and Comstock," *Dime Novel Roundup*, Vol. 47, No. 6, December, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Soderbergh, Peter A., "The Great Book War: Edward Stratemeyer and the Boy Scouts of America, 1910-1930," *New Jersey History*, Vol. XCI, No. 4, Winter, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Dizer, John T., TOM SWIFT & COMPANY. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1982, Chapter III, "Fortune and the Syndicate."

<sup>5</sup> Dizer, John T., "Armed with Pen and Ink: The Oliver Optic-Louisa May Alcott Feud," *Dime Novel Roundup*, Vol. 56, No. 4, August, 1987.

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION	
DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP	
1. Name of publication	DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP
2. Issue date for circulation data below	April 1985
3. Issue frequency	Quarterly
4. Issue for this year	1
5. Total number of copies (net press run)	1000
6. Total number of copies (net press run) less return	1000
7. Total number of copies (net press run) less return and other losses	1000
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# AN ITEM OF INTEREST TO DIME NOVEL & SERIES BOOK COLLECTORS

SWIFT SERIES' AUTHOR BORN IN BINGHAMTON, By Gene Grey. Article appearing in Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin, Sunday, July 12, 1992. Written from interview and knowledge of Dr. Donald Bronsky of Binghamton, New York. Very good article to add to one's ephemera about TOM SWIFT.

(Sent in by Dr. Donald Bronsky)

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## IN TRIBUTE TO THEODORE ROSCOE

February 20, 1906—May 29, 1992

By Rocco Joame Musemeche

When Theodore Roscoe expired on the morning of May 29, 1992, the date marked the passing of one of the last remaining writers in pulpdom.

Theodore Roscoe had a way with words. From him words on paper consistently delighted his vast following, an explosive vocabulary dispensed in a beckoning flow that heightened the role of colorful characters and storyline. The reading of his yarns suggested to the reader that the author was some kind of wizard blithely tossing bonbon sentences into each paragraph, the whole a rollercoaster style, a unique style that defied duplication. No one has ever attempted to imitate the Roscoe touch.

He was adept, moving from Saharan desert campaigns to fever-ridden jungles to voodoo haunted mansions to middle-European kingdoms, with a cast of characters and storyline enhancing his narrative. The flicker of flame developed into a conflagration, an adroit twist extinguished both. His prodigious output released a talespinning prowess never requiring a pseudonym. Each of his novels and short stories alike were blockbusters featuring subdued heroes and villains one crossed over to the opposite side of the stret to avoid.

Ted drew praise from readers in every magazine in which his stories appeared and he was free from unkind readers' criticism in the department reserved for comment, usually at the rear of the magazine.

Theodore Roscoe enjoyed stellar status and held his own at a time in pulp history when the most formidable array of writers were on the scene. It was the day of the real heavyweights, the years when the likes of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Max Brand, A. Merritt, and a score of others who broadshouldered their writing talent before the most critical readers during the most damaging depression in our nation's history. In such respectable competition, Ted Roscoe thrived mightily.

Any one of his stories turned the corner of success, and those focusing on Peter Scarlet, the curio hunter, and Bradshaw, the southeast Asia adventurer, were first-rate pleasers, but the number one favorite tales were those written about an ancient, bearded French Foreign Legionnaire named Thibaut Corday whom Roscoe was inclined to seat at a table of a sidewalk cafe in exotic Algiers as lilac sunset descended. Here, in the velvet shadows, Corday was prone to cast the contents of primitive cognac into his beard, gulp in appreciation and launch into another narrative of classic magnitude. Corday came to be regarded as "the Bearded Scheherazade," and any appearance of his on the newsstands was a guarantee of good reading. The sales of *Argosy*, the magazine featuring the Corday gems, escalated. They are today's highly sought issues, and were in great measure responsible in lifting the nation from the crippling effects of the depression years.

Theodore was a true blue American, a fact not too many of his readers were deeply aware of. The giveaway in some measure is evident in his series of stories on "Four Corners," and several vignettes on a selection of presidents he spotlighted. Though these graced the pages of a "lowly" pulp, they did contribute to foster or rather introduce culture to many not otherwise reached. He also wrote for the Navy Department in the Pentagon. Among his works there he produced the official World War II books on Submarine and Destroyer Operations.

Audrey Parente, the talented authoress of Roscoe, Hugh B. Cave, and Hugh Pentecost biographies, relayed to me the news of Ted Roscoe's demise. It sent this 77-year-old fan and friend tottering into a three-day weep-

ing marathon, an excursion of grief that still occasionally prompts dabbing at moist eyes with absorbent tissue.

To a great extent the pangs of sorrow can never be allayed for the loss of a kind and very giving friend means the void of picking up the phone for the delightful chat and addressing a familiar letter to better express thoughts. I am, of course, not alone in this for Ted Roscoe was too well known and appreciated by many, and will be missed more than mere words can convey.

A recall of memories, all of them happy, helps to tide one over so share with me, if you will, a few at random selections like the time he chose as Christmas gifts to me a French Foreign Legionnaire's cap, whose wearer saw action in a World War I Saharan campaign, while another was a dagger he picked up in Biskra. The cap, he assured me, occupied a place alongside the inkwell as he wrote the Corday tales, and today it hangs on a peg on the wall above my desk. Alongside is the original sketch used years ago in the *New York Sun* of Ted Roscoe, autographed of course [see page 112].

There is solace as I examine my collection for here Corday lives again quaffing liberal amounts of bottled Vesuvius prior to spouting high octane adventures. There is a measure of solace also in a few manuscripts he may have completed and one I know of he did not complete. This one, as he outlined briefly in a letter, would have probably been one of his best for its locale veered into several countries, and while it contained high adventure, it was a mystery story.

I had often urged him to write his own version of a story based on Haroun Al Rashid, the legendary royal, who went about doing good deeds and felt Ted had the touch to really come out with a winner in this one, but he declined on the grounds this as well as Corday yarns were somewhat outdated. Maybe, but his touch on this would have been a masterpiece I feel sure.

A tribute seems to fall short as nothing seems to adequately fulfill its contents. I feel the same on this one, so perhaps a proper summation presents itself when in bidding a farewell to a dear friend I add my thousand cheers for wonderful stories written for all of us, a million tears for those we will never read, and a dress parade in gratitude for being a good writer and gentleman to fans and friends.

As long as words endure you will not be forgotten, Theodore Roscoe.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### FROM FEARNOUGHT TO FEARNOT: A QUESTION OF ORIGIN.

By E. M. Sanchez-Saavedra

Recently I purchased a small illustrated pamphlet at a local flea-market on the strength of its intriguing title, FRED FEARNOUGHT, by Lawrence Lovechild. Measuring about 6½ x 9 inches, it is part of a series issued during the 1840s by George B. Zieber. Its eight illustrations are all hand-colored by stencil in bright primary hues and illustrate a rather "sappy" tale in verse about a brave young sailor. A typical stanza reads:

His mother stood upon the shore  
Until he reached the ship,  
And, as it glided o'er the waves,  
A prayer rose to her lip.

Fred's ship engages a pirate and defeate it (natch!). Our heroic middy rescues his captain and is brevetted to midshipman during the con-

E. B. MEARS, STEREOTYPED.

## Grandfather Lovechild's Nursery Stories.

## FRED FEARNOUGHT.



BY LAWRENCE LOVECHILD.

WITH EIGHT SPLENDID ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD BY  
BRIGHTLY,  
FROM ORIGINAL DESIGNS BY  
DARLEY.

PHILADELPHIA:  
GEORGE B. ZIEBER.  
1847.

The Clerk's Office of the District Court in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1846, by GEORGE B. ZIEBER, in

flict. He then rescues "a fainting lady." After several more pirates are brought low, Fred becomes successively a lieutenant and a captain, and returns home to his mother and sister with the rescued lady, whom he marries.

And there, with those who loved him, round,  
He spent his after days,  
Giving to God for all His care  
His gratitude and praise.

George B. Zieber, the publisher, is better known for meatier and more sensational products, such as reprints of George Lippard's *THE QUAKER CITY; OR, THE MONKS OF MONK HALL* of 1844-1845.

Fifty-one years later, with a more Americanized spelling, the name would become a household word among devotees of "nickul liberties." On December 9, 1898, Frank Tousey launched one of his more successful colored-cover five-cent weeklies: *Work and Win*, featuring the adventures of a Frank Merriwell/Jack Harkaway clone named "Fred Fearnot." The author of this long-running series was identified as "Hal Standish." Many of the tales were the work of Harvey King Shackelford (1840-1906), one of Tousey's star writers.

Loyal readers of Street & Smith's *Tip Top Weekly* protested this manifestation of a free market economy in strongly-worded protests to *Tip Top's* "Applause" column. In No. 183, FRANK MERRIWELL AT YALE AGAIN, October 12, 1899, "A Constant Reader" from Chicago, Ill., lambasted Tousey's offering: .

"Every dealer in periodicals says...that the Tip Tops are always sold out in short order. Now that's where the trouble began. An envious rival...decided to spring a 'just as good' which dealers could work off on unsuspecting purchasers.

"And so he got up a publication which, at the present writing, is aping Tip Top in most everything except high standard, intelligent handling, and realism, all of which is woefully lacking.

"They copied the Tip Top's decorative heading (and, by the way, don't their pictures look like they'd been done with a stencil?) and the Tip Top's medal was also swiped.

"And, crowning infamy, they rung in an author with an alias resembling the name of the only Burt L. Standish."

In the same issue, "C.L.J." of Jacksonville, Fla., noted that "another weekly has sprung up and has tried to imitate the Tip Top Weekly in every possible way. The hero has two 'best girls,' was an actor, wrote a play, and then the hero got up a show of his own. When playing ball he has a curve that no one else can throw, called a 'spiral,' and the author signs his name as Hal Standish."

What neither of these incensed fans realized was that "Hal Standish" had been a Tousey house name since the early 1870s, first used by Lu Senarens for serials in *The Boys of New York* and tales in the *Wide Awake Library*. "Burt L." seems to have been the plagiarist in the matter of pseudonyms. Obviously, the juvenile critics were unacquainted with "Grandfather Lovechild's Nursery Stories" of the Mexican War era, or this would have provided additional ammunition to fire at Frank Tousey.

Story-paper and dime novel characters with alliteratively allegorical names were an essential stock in trade. Ned Buntline (E. Z. C. Judson) once commented that his job was half done once he had fixed on a catchy title for a story.

In the opening salvo of his attack on the Stratemeyer Syndicate, Percy Keese Fitzhugh invented "Dan Dreadnaught of the Eureka Patrol," whose twenty-seven volumes of improbable adventures had corrupted a small lad named Connover Bennett. After Connover accidentally shoots another boy while emulating his storybook hero, in TOM SLADE BOY SCOUT OF THE MOVING PICTURES (1915) the local Boy Scout leader has to intervene and wean him away from his series books. Presumably unknown to Mr. Fitzhugh, a story entitled "Dick Dreadnought of the 'Terror.' His Adventures Afloat and Ashore had appeared some forty-three years earlier in a British story paper: Edwin J. Brett's *The Rovers of the Sea; or, Perils by Flood and Field*, Vol. I, No. 26, August 27, 1872, through No. 37, November 11, 1872.

No. 28 OF THE NEW

THE

WEEKLY JOURNAL



## OR, PERILS BY FLOOD AND FIELD.

No. 28.—Vol. I.]

SEPTEMBER 9, 1872.

[PRICE ONE PENNY WEEKLY.]



DICK DREADNOUGHT.—(Instructions for Colouring Next Week.)

DICK DREADNOUGHT OF "THE  
TERROR."  
HIS ADVENTURES AFLOAT & ASHORE.

CHAPTER XI.  
LOCILLE.

Dick was struck by the perfect order and regularity which prevailed on deck. Evidently Chabot was a strict disciplinarian. Though their presence was now known to every one on board, from the sentry pacing up and down to the small boy mending a rope, they were received in dead silence.

Chabot was the first to break the spell which he had himself evoked. "Hear," he cried, in French; "come here, my friend." Instantly a tall man came out from the shadow of the rigging, and saluted the pirate by touching his cap; then stood motionless before him—up-

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317 Pittsburg Ave., Bisbee, AZ 85603-1238

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Collector:—After 25 years, I've decided to sell my extra copies of TOM SWIFT, ROY BLAKELY and BOBBSEY TWINS books. The list [opposite page] details, as best as possible, what I have and their condition. I would like to sell all three groups together for \$325 including the shipping. However, if I find that this is not possible, I'll invite your offers for the individual titles.

Thank you,

*Tim Ware*

Tim Ware

Tim Ware

39 Pound Road, Cumberland, RI 02864

(401)334-7733

## TOM SWIFT

3	Motorcycle	G&D Tan	2 fair, 1 excellent
1	Airship	G&D Tan	1 good
1	Submarine	G&D Tan	1 fair
1	Electric Runabout	G&D Tan	1 fair
3	Diamond Makers	2 G&D Tan/1 G&D Orange	All fair
1	Caves of Ice	G&D Tan	1 fair
1	Sky Racer	G&D Tan	1 good
1	Electric Rifle	G&D Tan	1 good
1	City of Gold	G&D Tan	1 fair
2	In Captivity	G&D Tan	1 fair, 1 good
1	Wizard Camera	G&D Tan	1 fair
2	Great Searchlight	G&D Tan	2 fair
3	Giant Cannon	G&D Tan	1 good, 2 fair
2	Photo Telephone	1 G&D Tan/1 G&D Orange	2 good
1	Aerial Warship	G&D Tan	1 fair
1	Land of Wonders	G&D Tan	1 fair
1	War Tank	G&D Tan	1 fair
1	Air Scout	G&D Tan (with Jacket)	1 good
4	Undersea Search	G&D Tan	1 good, 3 poor
1	Firefighter	G&D Tan	1 fair
3	Electric Locomotive	G&D Tan	1 good, 1 fair, 1 poor
1	Flying Boat	G&D Tan	1 fair
2	Airline Express	G&D Tan (with Jacket)	1 good
		Whitman Blue (with Jacket)	1 good
1	Circling the Globe	G&D Tan	1 fair
1	Talking Pictures	G&D Orange	1 fair
2	House on Wheels	G&D Tan	1 fair
		Whitman Green	1 good
1	Big Dirigible	Whitman Green	1 good
2	Sky Train	Whitman Brown (with Jacket)	1 fair - good
		Whitman Orange	1 good
3	Television Detector	Whitman Orange	2 fair - good
		Whitman Green (with Jacket)	1 good
1	Ocean Airport	Whitman Green	1 good
1	Planet Stone	Whitman Brown	1 fair - good

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Condition Good to Fine..1 in DJ
- PATTY - WELLS.. 17 Books in Series..Have 17 Books  
Condition Good to Fine..10 in DJ's
- BETTY GORDON - EMERSON..15 Books in Series..Have 14 Books  
Condition Good to Fine..2 in DJ's
- RUTH FIELDING - EMERSON..30 Books in Series..Have 30 Books  
Condition Fairly Good to Fine..6 in DJ's
- BEVERLY GRAY - BLANK..26 Books in Series..Have 26 Books  
Condition Fairly Good to Fine..6 in DJ's

#### BOY'S BOOKS

- BASEBALL JOE - CHADWICK..14 Books in Series..Have 14 Books  
Condition Fair to Fine..1 in DJ
- BIG LEAGUE - STANDISH..16 Books in Series..Have 15 Books  
Condition Fair to Fine..3 in DJ's
- ROVER BOYS - WINFIELD..30 Books in 2 Series..Have 29 Books  
Condition Good to Fine..11 in DJ's
- TOM SWIFT - APPLETON..38 Books in Series..Have 38 Books  
Condition Poor to Fine..26 in DJ's
- JERRY TODD - EDWARDS..16 Books in Series..Have 16 Books  
Condition VG to Fine..2 in DJ, 2 DJ Xerox